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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

SATURDAY, February 10, 1940

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "TIPS FOR HOME DYERS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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In February, even the busiest housewife is likely to find a lull in her days when she can catch up on odd jobs. Now is the time to fill in your free hours doing some of the things you haven't time for the rest of the year.

For example, maybe you have some pieces of fabric or left-over clothes laid away that need new color to be useful again. Now's the time to dye them -- now while the children are in school, and housework isn't too heavy, and you can work undisturbed. Now's your chance to get out the dye-pot and make these fabrics look new again. A little dyeing this month may provide material for some of the children's spring clothes you'll be making next month. Or perhaps you can get the house ready for spring with new curtains at the windows, and slip covers on the furniture if you dye old material to harmonize with the other furnishings.

Dyeing is a very old household art. It can be a great success and money-saver. Or it can be a waste of good time and material. It all depends on how you go about it. You need to know certain tricks of dyeing. And you need to give the job care and close attention. You can't hope to get good results if you try to bake a cake, answer the doorbell, feed the baby, and stir the dye-pot at the same time. And you can't hope to get good results if you buy just any old dye and put it in the pot helter-skelter without following the directions. That way your material will probably come out with spots or streaks or poor color.

For success in home dyeing here are some tips from Margaret Furry, textile chemist of the Bureau of Home Economics.

Miss Furry says people often ask which kind of dye is best -- powder dye, liquid dye, or cake dye. Drug stores sell household dye in all 3 of these forms, and all can give successful results. If you use powdered or cake dye, be sure to dissolve it in water and strain it through cloth before you add it to the dye bath. Otherwise you will get spots or streaks. Here's an idea to insure even color and save your hands: Tie the dye powder in a small cheesecloth bag and put the bag in a soap-shaker. Then shake in the dye-water until all dye dissolves.

Some dyes on the market are for tinting rather than true dyeing. These tints you use in cool water. Tinting is a quick way to color fabric, but it doesn't make a permanent color. You have to re-tint each time you launder the article. The dye you boil in the fabric gives the lasting color.

And speaking of color, Miss Furry says to buy the right dye for the fabric, and then follow the directions that come with it -- follow the directions to the T. You see, some dyes are fast to silk and wool but not to cotton, linen or rayon. Some dyes are fast with one method of dyeing, but not with another. And some dyes are fast to washing but not to sunlight and not to perspiration. These are points to check on before you buy the dye. In general, animal fibers like wool and pure silk take dyes more readily than vegetable fibers like cotton, linen, or rayon. Wool is probably the easiest material to dye, and pure silk a close second. Weighted silk or filled silks are poor risks for the dye pot because they may dye unevenly, or weaken and go to pieces in the process. Another poor risk for dyeing is a fabric streaked and faded by sunshine. Such material rarely will dye evenly, unless you dye it a very dark color or black.

Here are a few tips on getting the material ready to dye. If you are going to dye a garment, remove all the trimmings and buttons and rip out hems, pleats and linings so the dye can penetrate the garment evenly. Remove all spots and stains, and then wash the fabric. Dye won't cover spots, or soil, or soap. So after

washing the material well in soap and water, rinse it thoroughly. If you are planning to dye a new fabric, wash out all starch, or sizing, or filling, because dye will not "take" well if these substances fill up the fibers of the fabric.

The next step is to assemble the equipment for dyeing. You need a kettle of granite or agateware, large enough so the material can move about in the water freely. For good results you need plenty of water. And soft water is better than hard water. You'll also need scales to weigh the material before it is wet so you'll know how much dye to use. And you'll need a long smooth rod of wood or glass for stirring. The fabric must be in constant motion during dyeing and all folds need to be open. Be sure no part of the material floats on top of the dye-bath or remains at the bottom, because this part will not come out with the same color as the rest.

The directions on the dye package will give you all the other details of the process.

All this may sound as if dyeing fabric is a difficult, fussy, and tiresome job. But once you've found what 10 or 15 cents' worth of dye can do toward making old clothes and left-over fabrics look like new, you are likely to think the trouble well worth while.

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